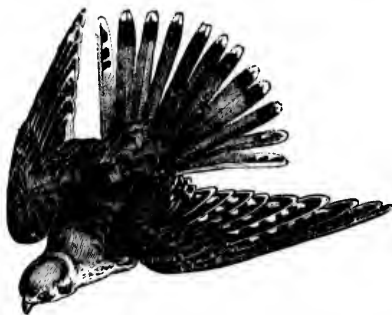


states, but in those localities it is the most abundant of the birds of prey. I can add but little to Wilson's description that will be of interest: it is as follows:—



"The habits and manners of this bird are well known. It flies rather irregularly, occasionally suspending itself in the air, hovering over a particular spot for a minute or two, and then shooting off in another direction. It perches on the top of a dead tree or pole, in the middle of a field or meadow, and, as it alights, shuts its long wings so suddenly that they seem instantly to disappear: it sits here in an almost perpendicular position, sometimes for an hour at a time, frequently jerking its tail, and reconnoitring the ground below, in every direction, for mice, lizards, &c. It approaches the farmhouse, particularly in the morning, skulking about the barn-yard for mice or young chickens. It frequently plunges into a thicket after small birds, as if by random, but always with a particular, and generally a fatal aim. One day I observed a bird of this species perched on the highest top of a large poplar, on the skirts of the wood, and was in the act of raising the gun to my eye, when he swept down, with the rapidity of an arrow, into a thicket of briars, about thirty yards off, where I shot him dead, and, on coming up, found a small field-sparrow quivering in his grasp. Both our aims had been taken in the same instant; and, unfortunately for him, both were fatal. It is particularly fond of watching along hedge-rows and in orchards, where small birds usually resort. When grasshoppers are plenty, they form a considerable part of its food.

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